14. Excise.—It is upon the Excise Department that you have to depend for the wherewithal for meeting the cost of many services rendered by the State to the people. For, it is the Excise Department that finds a half of our revenue. Excise is a tax on certain home commodities and on licenses for certain trades. Some of these are devoted to the provision of luxuries; others are definitely or doubtfully pernicious. It is, as stated in the Administration Report, the policy of the Government to restrain and to control recourse to them and as a process towards restriction to make the cost of indulgence high. If, in the course of such control and restriction, money flows into the public coffers, who can blame the Government for utilising such accretions for the public well-being ?

15. Abkari.—As a result of action taken by the League of Nations, further checks are being put upon the availability of opium and ganja in the State and spontaneously Travancore has been reducing the facilities for obtaining drink. The revenue derived from this last source is exhibited under the term 'Abkari' in our budget. You will find that 'Abkari' yielded less than Rs. 20 lakhs out of the Rs. 95 lakhs the Excise Department contributed to the exchequer last year. Some among you may believe that the Government foster intemperance to swell the public purse. You will disabuse your minds of that idea if you refer to the reduction in the number of toddy and arrack shops by 76 at the beginning of this year ; to the reduction in the number of licenses for the sale of foreign liquor ; to the enhancement of the duty on jaggery-arrack ; to the raising of the rates of tree tax for tapping ; to the raising of the age-limit from 16 to 18 of persons engaged in the sale or transport of alcoholic beverages ; to the prohibition of the sale of arrack or toddy to minors and of arrack to adult women ; and to the reduction of the limit of possession of jaggery-arrack from eight drams to six drams.

16. Tobacco.—In the direction of tobacco, I would invite your attention to the extension of the prohibition against the use of tobacco by juveniles to the principal municipal towns. Another measure of some importance in the Excise Department was the substitution, for the reckoning of duty, of the pound *avoirdupois* for the *rathal* or the Dutch pound. The change resulted in bringing under levy a trifle over three tolas a pound which represents the difference between the two units of weight.

17. Customs.—The Commissioner of Excise is also responsible for the collection of customs revenue ; and in dealing with his department, it is necessary to direct your attention to the revision of the tariff-values of certain staple articles of export, such as copra and cocoanuts, so as to make them fit in with present market values and to stimulate trade in those commodities by enabling Travancore produce to enter the field of competition on even terms. Customs revenue reflects the trade of the country and the fact that during the past year there was an increase of over Rs. 2 lakhs in our customs receipts shows that trade was brisk.

18. Ports.—Our ports are becoming more active and are attracting more shipping. Both in the number of steamers and in tonnage there was a very substantial increase, Alleppey attracting the largest amount of additional shipping. For Trivandrum and Colachel also, the results are encouraging. A direction in which I have ordered enquiries is the cause of the large falling off in country craft which call at our ports. The explanation so far given is that competition with coasting steamers is responsible for the decline. Means have been adopted, as you will see from the Administration Report, for making Alleppey and Trivandrum ports more serviceable to shipping. The question is now being considered of further improving Alleppey and of affording greater facilities at Quilon. In regard to the latter, before taking further steps, endeavour is being made to secure guarantees of more tonnage for the port, both in imports and exports. If we may be sure of a regular thirty or forty thousand tons extra, it would be worth while building a pier or a jetty there. Arrangements are in progress for a trunk telephone connection between Alleppey and Cochin.

19. Administration of Justice.—A matter which is of vital importance to the people of the country is the promptitude with which justice is administered.

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Let us begin at the top. The High Court has disposed of a larger number of cases this year than in the previous year, but, nevertheless, the total pendency list at the end of the year increased. The new work that came before the Court showed a general increase. The District Courts revealed the same phenomenon, an increasing measure of outturn overborne by a growing accumulation of arrears. The figures are : the number of ordinary suits and small causes for disposal was 2,844, of which 997 cases were disposed of, leaving a balance of 1,847 cases, the corresponding figures of the previous year being 2,713, 931 and 1,782. Under appeals, the total number for disposal was 10,030, of which 4,069 were disposed of, leaving a balance of 5,961 cases, the figures for 1100 being 9,467, 3,638 and 5,829, respectively. The Judiciary is liberally manned. Why, then, does justice lag? The explanation lies in this. The High Court requires on an average 509 days for the disposal of a first appeal and 389 days for a second appeal. In the case of the District Courts, the average duration is 746 days for ordinary contested suits and 734 days for original small cause suits. In the case of uncontested cases, the duration is 343 days for ordinary suits and 331 days for original small cause suits. In the case of the Munsiffs' Courts, the average duration for the disposal of a contested ordinary suit is 422 days and for an uncontested suit 104 days. This Assembly is very much alive to the need for speeding up the administration of justice and has repeatedly pressed this upon the Government. The Government are at one with the Assembly; and during the last year they drew up proposals for the appointment of a committee to enquire into and suggest correctives for the law's delays. The matter was placed before the Legislative Council. They vetoed the proposed committee. And so the Government have turned to the High Court, confident that it will give special attention to the question of a general acceleration of disposals. It is a matter too in which the Bar can effectively co-operate.

20. Police.—There is nothing of special note to hold your attention in the regular work of the Police force. But in one direction it was felt that special arrangements were necessary to enable the department to exercise a prompter and more effective control over the irregular and careless ways of the large and growing fleets of motor vehicles plying for hire all over the State. Two additional Traffic Inspectors, qualified in motor mechanics, have been appointed and are now under training as Police Officers. The idea is to divide the motor roads of the State into three divisions, each in the charge of an Inspector.

21. Registration.—The partitions of property following upon the Nayar, the Ezhava and the Vellala Regulations have brought a large accession of work to the Registration Department. To cope with this, five new Sub-Registry offices were opened and the jurisdiction of several other offices was re-arranged so as to distribute the load.

22. Public Works.—As usual, the expenditure on works of public utility was not stinted, and nearly Rs. 30,50,000 was utilised by the P. W. D. Of this amount, only Rs. 4,31,000 was spent on buildings, both new constructions and repairs and maintenance. Practically, all the rest was spent on communications and irrigation works both reproductive and protective. About Rs. 1,60,000 was spent on bridges and culverts ; Rs. 1,20,000 went to improvement of canals ; and about Rs. 5,59,000 was devoted to new roads and special improvements to roads. Of the sum of Rs. 5,59,000, gentlemen from the northern and the central Travancore will be pleased to know that their needs received special consideration. Rs. 2,74,000 was expended on roads for the Kottayam Division and Rs. 1,55,000 on roads for the Quilon Division. Alleppey was until the other day accessible only by water communication. The completion of the Quilon-Alleppey road was specially expedtied by the Chief Engineer and motor traffic is now plying between Quilon and Alleppey. Another road to the construction of which special efforts have been directed is the Alleppey-Shertallai-Arur road. About Rs. 63,700 has been allotted towards the construction of this road during the current year and rapid progress is being made so that there will be through communication by road from our southern frontier, Aramboly, to Shertallai

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